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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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against Women (CEDAW)

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

Initial and second periodic reports of States parties

ZAMBIA

V.91-30221

PART I

1. In compliance with the provision of Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to which the Government of the Republic of Zambia is a State party, it hereby presents its initial report on the administrative legislative and other measures it has taken to fight discrimination against women in the country.

A. Historical and Cultural Influence

2. Historical and cultural factors have played a part in reducing the full realization of the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women (Equality, Development and Peace) in most of the Third World Countries, including Zambia.

3. The Zambian Government has always considered the active participation of women in the affairs of the nation as a crucial element to the Zambian revolution of transforming the society from a capitalist-oriented through socialism to a humanist society. Women in Zambia therefore have an important role to play in this transformation, just as they did when fighting for national independence during the colonial period.

4. When 1976-1985 was proclaimed the United Nations Decade for Women, the Women's League of the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP) was made the National Machinery responsible for coordinating women's activities in the field of equality, development and peace. The highlight of the achievements in the objectives of equality during the Decade was the ratification by the Zambian Government of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 1st February, 1985.

5. Prior to independence there were fewer educational and training facilities for girls than for boys at all levels of the education system. The colonial Government was inclined towards educating males, most of whom were to take up jobs open to Africans in the public and private sector. These jobs were restricted to mostly men. Due to this, education was seen to be of little value to girls. This was compounded by the negative parental attitudes towards the education of girls and the cultural values and beliefs which made parents reluctant to invest in their daughters' education.

6. The Zambian Government, as a matter of policy, decided to correct this situation and allow equal opportunity to girls and boys in the field of education to an extent where the 'cut off points' for girls to qualify to go to secondary level of education was deliberately made lower than those for boys. In addition, the tendency by girls to restrict themselves to the so-called feminine or domestic subjects and careers was recognized by the Women's League as a bottleneck to women's participation and contribution to the socio-economic development of the nation. Girls therefore, have been encouraged to take up science and technical subjects at technical institutions and to that end all courses offered by the country's Department of Technical Education and Vocational Training are open to both girls and boys.

B. Women in Development Chapter - 4th National Development Plan

7. In the Zambia Fourth National Development Plan, 1989-1993, a whole chapter (chapter XXV) called "Women in Development", has been set aside to address the issue of full integration of women in development as part of the Government's overall effort to ensure the fullest participation possible of all sections and communities in the country.

8. Although they constitute 60% of the population of Zambia, only a few women have attained some degree of success in various fields such as education, medicine, law, business and management, the majority lag behind men in all fields. They have limited access to infrastructural facilities and services, thereby limiting their participation in the development process of the nation.

9. The Fourth National Development Plan intends to tackle the issue of national development, as a process which includes the total and full participation of all men and women in the country in all activities and fields of human endeavour at all levels. This means involving women throughout the development process i.e. policy formulation, implementation and evaluation and the attainment of benefits from the whole process. It has been realised that in the past, development planning had not given adequate focus to the needs and issues of women. Most of the programmes were designed with an assumption that they would cater for the needs of all people in the nation as a whole. This chapter was included in the Fourth National Development Plan to redress that assumption. The chapter addresses itself to issues in the following areas including provision of investment programmes:-

- Awareness Building
- Legal status
- Institutional building
- Women in Agriculture
- Women in Health
- Women and Education
- Women in Commerce and Industry
- Women in Science and Technology
- Youth Women and Girls
- Women and the Media
- Women in Environment and Energy
- Women in Politics
- Women in Employment
- Women and Shelter
- Women in Transport and Communication
- Women in Co-operatives
- Women and Special issues
- Women and Credit

C. Women in Development Unit at the NCDP

10. This unit at the National Commission for Development Planning (NCDP) coordinates Women's Programmes with other Government Ministries and Departments. It is in the process of being upgraded to a full Department so that it can effectively implement the chapter on Women in Development in the Fourth National Development Plan of the Country. A sum of US$ 1 million is being offered by the Swedish NORAD Government for that purpose.

D. Establishment of Women Affairs Desks in Ministries

11. The Party and its Government has established Women's Affairs Desks in all Government Ministries to attend to women's issues and programmes and ensure that they were particularly and promptly given due attention. To this end such Desks are to be manned by officers of not lower than Assistant Secretary in rank. At that level, consultation and coordination with the women in Development Unit at the UNDP will be facilitated and consolidated.

PART II

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

12. The Zambian Government has taken positive action to identify and compile a list of statutes containing some discriminatory provisions and legislative and administrative measures were being taken to correct the situation.

(i) Administratively, the following measures have been taken by the Zambian Government relating to female officers:-

(a) Conditions of Service in the Public Service affecting female officers have been reviewed. The reviewed areas relate to receipt of travel benefits when married female officers travel on vacation leave on their own. Hitherto, they would only be covered by the husband's employer when he goes on leave himself. In addition, payment of housing allowances has been extended to married female officers if they are not housed by the employer and when they travel to and from vacation leave. In the same vein, burial benefits are given to these officers whenever they lose a spouse or one of their children. In the past, only married male officers were eligible to such benefits and this constitutes discriminatory practice;

(b) In terms of education, a system of "cut off point" has been introduced and made the passing marks lower for girls than boys during their Grade 7 examination to qualify for places in Grade 8. On enrolment into Grade 1, there is also a deliberate increase in the admission of girls to achieve equality in education, since the Government has realised that girls had lagged behind in education in the past;

(c) Women have been encouraged to carry out small scale industries so that they will be able to hold money and become economically independent with the assistance of Government establishment institutions to provide funding.

(ii) Legislative measures taken include:-

(a) The amendment of the Civil Service Pension Act; (Cap 410) to provide that pensionable age of both male and female officers is pegged at 55 years;

(b) Through Income Tax Act Amendment No. 14 of 1987, married women are eligible to claim their own right on insurance;

(c) Article 8 (b) of the Zambia Constitution has been replaced so that both men and women may apply for citizenship after 10 years period of residence in Zambia;

(d) The enactment of Acts No. 5 and 6 of 1989 - The "Wills Administration of Estate" and the "Intestates Succession" Acts has addressed to issue of inheritance on the death of the owner. The uniform intestate succession law that will be applicable through the country makes adequate financial and other provisions for the surviving spouse, children, dependants etc. The second Act has simplified the Law governing the making of wills and provides for the administration of estate of persons who die leaving a valid will. Both Acts take into account the plight of women.

13. While the will by the Government to eradicate discriminatory law is very strong, the pace at which they are being amended has been slowed down by shortage of manpower in the Ministry of Legal Affairs. However, the Women Affairs Sub-Committee referred to earlier on acts as the watch dog on the implementation of amendment of all pieces of legislation with discriminatory practices in the country through regular reminders to the relevant institutions. In the required periodic reports to follow, information will be provided on measures taken by the State to fully implement the principles of the Convention, especially on the participation of women at all levels of activity of the nation.